

IN THE
INDIANA TAX COURT

NO. 49T10-9309-TA-70

TOWN OF ST. JOHN, et al.,)
)
Petitioners,)
)
v.)
)
DEPARTMENT OF LOCAL)
GOVERNMENT FINANCE as successor)
to the STATE BOARD OF TAX)
COMMISSIONERS,)
)
Respondent.)

MONTHLY REPORT 42

As successor to the State Board of Tax Commissioners, this is monthly report 42 from the Department of Local Government Finance under the Court's order dated May 31, 2000, 729 N.E.2d 242, 247. The report explains the Department's activities during November 2003 to implement the Court's order.

Lake County Reassessment

Department staff met with Lake County contractors in Schererville, Friday, November 7, 2003. Action items included the status of sending the Form 11, Notice of Assessment, to Lake County taxpayers by township; the final roll of county data to the auditor's MVP tax computer system; hardware usage extensions; training; equalization; appeals and public relations.

The Form 11s for St. John, Ross and Hobart townships, which were mailed November 4, contained an inaccurate deadline date to appeal due to a slightly delayed date in mailings of the notice. Therefore, CLT inserted a letter with each Form 11 explaining the change and informing taxpayers of the correct deadline. North Township Form 11s were mailed November 14. Calumet Township's notices, which will be the last to be mailed, will be sent in December.

CLT and the Department are also addressing returned notices through additional checks. They have issued amended Form 11s in certain cases based on updated information supplied by local assessing officials regarding percentages of improvement completion and other corrections that had not previously been made available to CLT during the data collection process, such as adjustments for flooding and drainage ditches.

North township employees received training November 13, 2003. The Department will survey the townships to determine additional training needs and to address any problems the township assessors are having.

Manatron continues to assist the auditor's office with handling the different rolls of data from the assessor's system, including the applications of credits and deductions. Manatron has updated extending T1 service lines to ensure the county's computer security and back-up procedures are sound.

CLT continues to hold informal hearings in Schererville. As of November 14, 2003, the office has received 3,720 phone calls and held hearings on 1,823 parcels. The Department continues to review informal appeal files as it prepares to approve and issue final assessment determinations. Crowe assists the Department with evaluating the data

collected by CLT in its hearing tracking system in an effort to streamline the review process.

The Department took part in two town hall meetings sponsored by the Northwest Indiana Quality of Life Council. The first meeting was held on the Valparaiso University Campus on November 19, 2003 and the second meeting was held at Indiana University Northwest on November 25, 2003. The panel discussed Indiana's transition to fair market value and addressed questions and concerns of the audience.

Software Certification

All software to be used for this reassessment is fully certified at both the state and county level.

Budgets

The Department has certified 71 county budgets for assessment year 2002, and 53 counties have mailed out tax bills.

County Ratio Studies

The Department has received 89 county ratio studies to date and approved 86. *See Attached Map.* The approval allows the county assessor to issue Form 11s and supply certified values to the county auditor.

Counties of Concern

There are still three counties that have failed to provide equalization studies to the Department for approval: Noble, Brown, and Lawrence. *See attached map.* There are also several counties whose budgets have not yet been certified for billing this year, but the list gets increasingly shorter.

Brown County

Brown County is currently negotiating a contract with the Nexus Company. The Department has asked that the county forward the contract on to the state for approval, as it contains non-standard provisions. The Department met with county assessing officials and a representative of the Nexus Company November 20, 2003, to discuss certain contract provisions.

Public Affairs

The office of media relations continues to answer calls and respond to public information requests. Requests most often come from members of the media. The Department has continued to provide them with accurate information in a timely manner.

Legislative Review

The House Ways and Means Committee and the Senate Finance Committee held meetings around the state to discuss possible reasons and solutions to the state's current reassessment concerns. The Ways and Means Committee held six public meeting throughout the state, visiting such cities as Indianapolis, Terre Haute, Richmond, Lafayette, Ft. Wayne, Madison, New Albany and Evansville. Members of the Senate Finance Committee also held hearings throughout the state. Department staff attended several of the meetings scheduled by the committees. In addition, as a result of these meetings, the Department prepared detailed analyses of the data that is so far available. The Department also issued several directives and policy documents clarifying the valuation of income producing property, residential property that is used as rental units, and agricultural land, among others.

On November 18, Organization Day, the House and Senate convened to address property taxes and the reassessment. This mini-session, as it has been called, has included targeted measures to address the reassessment. The House and Senate, as of this writing, have passed bills that have several provisions mirroring each other. On December 1, 2003, the bills will switch sides and hearings are scheduled in House Ways and Means and Senate Finance. Both bills would extend the homestead credit application deadline and allow payments in installments as a county option for those most affected by the reassessment. The House bill would provide increased deductions for homesteads and for other properties, including agricultural land and older homes. The Senate bill has no comparable provisions.

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that I served a copy of the foregoing report by first class mail,
postage prepaid, on counsel of record listed below on December 1, 2003:

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